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Google 'cannot proceed with third-party cookie deprecation'

Competition concerns about Google's Privacy Sandbox must be addressed before third-party cookies can be deprecated.

[Nicola Agius](#) on February 5, 2024 at 10:34 am | Reading time: 3 minutes

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Google cannot proceed with third-party cookie deprecation until it resolves concerns raised by the UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

The search engine needs to do more to address issues raised around its proposed Privacy Sandbox changes or else it will not be able to deprecate third-party cookies from Chrome in the second half of 2024 as planned.

Why we care. Brands might gain extra time to explore alternatives to [third-party cookies](#) if Google is forced to delay their deprecation to address the CMA's concerns. However, marketers shouldn't presume a delay, as there is still time for Google to resolve these issues.

What is Google's Privacy Sandbox? Google is introducing the Privacy Sandbox program as an alternative to third-party cookies to enable advertisers to deliver targeted ads in Chrome while minimizing improper cross-site and cross-app tracking. As per Google's Privacy Sandbox [documentation](#):

- "The Privacy Sandbox initiative aims to create technologies that both protect people's privacy online and give companies and developers tools to build thriving digital businesses."

CMA report. The CMA published a report detailing its ongoing competition concerns regarding Google's Privacy Sandbox, including:

- Google may continue to benefit from user activity data while limiting competitors' access to the same data.
- Google's ability to control the inclusion of ad tech rivals on this list could advantage its ad tech services.
- Publishers and advertisers may be less able to effectively identify fraudulent activity.

Next steps. The CMA is working with Google to resolve these issues and will report on the each engine's progress in its next quarterly update which is due at the end of April.

Progress so far. Although the CMA stated that Google still has work to do, the report confirmed that in the last quarter of 2023, the search engine fulfilled its commitments to making competition fairer.

What the Competition and Markets Authority is saying. A spokesperson for the the UK's Competition and Markets Authority said in a statement:

- "In Q1 2024, we will focus on working with Google to resolve the competition concerns we have identified in this report."
- "We are particularly keen on resolving any remaining concerns relating to the design of the Privacy Sandbox tools and to ensure that Google does not use the tools in a way that self-preferences its own advertising services."
- "As part of this, we are also looking to clarify the longer-term governance arrangements for the Privacy Sandbox. We would welcome comments from interested parties on our analysis of the concerns so that we can take these into account in our discussions with Google between now and the Standstill Period."

What Google is saying. A Google spokesperson told Search Engine Land:

- "We continue to move forward with our plans to phase out third-party cookies in H2 2024, subject to addressing any remaining competition concerns from the UK CMA."
- "We are confident the industry can make the transition in 2024 based on all the tremendous progress we've seen from leading companies."

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Deep dive. Read the Competition and Markets Authority [report](#) in full for more information.

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Nicola Agius was Paid Media Editor of Search Engine Land from 2023-2024. She covered paid media, retail media and more. Prior to this, she was SEO Director at Jungle Creations (2020-2023), overseeing the company's editorial strategy for multiple websites. She has over 15 years of experience in journalism and has previously worked at OK! Magazine (2010-2014), Mail Online (2014-2015), Mirror (2015-2017), Digital Spy (2017-2018) and The Sun (2018-2020). She also previously teamed up with SEO agency Blue Array to co-author Amazon bestselling book Mastering In-House SEO.

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